

view. Dr. Hope tells us: 'It is an almost invariable rule that a low birth-rate is accompanied by a low rate of infantile mortality, but the districts with high birth-rates, notwithstanding that a larger proportion of babies perish in infancy, have relatively and actually a larger number of infants living at the end of the year than districts with a low birth-rate.' The point of this argument is rather obscure, but I cannot see that it confutes the eugenicist. For surely if what he deplures is the differential survival of what society (rightly or wrongly) regards as its inferior strains, the fact that this superior birth-rate is *not* compensated by their superior death-rate is only an additional matter for regret. And if "the further contention that the survivors of those who perish are likely to be healthier where the birth-rate is low does not seem to be founded on fact" (p. 112), this only shows that where there is a low birth-rate there cannot be much selection. This is obvious, but it is no reply to the contention that where the birth-rate and the death-rate are both high there may be a considerable amount of selection, and that nature's cruel methods may be operating to improve racial quality in spite of well-meaning human efforts to frustrate them.

All this is not, of course, to *disapprove* of the Baby Week scheme. There may be moral and political considerations which speak imperatively in its favour. But it is not clear that an adequate case has been made out for it *on eugenical grounds*, and its excellence is not self-evident. Nor should it be assumed that eugenists should support it. The Eugenics Education Society should beware of lavishing upon the schemes of politicians an unreserved and uncritical approval. The world has suffered more than enough from the effects of well-meaning ignorance. And our function surely is to study the enormous complexities of the problems of social biology, and to warn politicians and enthusiasts that they should look before they leap.

F. C. S. SCHILLER.

I have read Dr. Schiller's criticisms of the eugenics of Baby Week with much interest. Perhaps my own impressions may be of value as a record.

I was associated with three gatherings—each of a different type—and learned various lessons therefrom. One was a collection of true country folk, the other two were held on the outskirts of small country towns, hardly more than large villages.

In the first, a village of low wages, the type of child was poor; two mothers were very deaf, several children were ailing. The difference in physique and intelligence between the four or five well-to-do children—squire's grandchildren—and the labourer's children was marked.

There was no competition or medical examination. It seemed impossible to do more than advise the mothers to welcome the health visitors and the medical inspection at the schools, and to assure them that their work of maintaining the homes of the country was of great national importance. It seemed a case for encouragement and sympathy.

A second gathering was something of the nature of a district and seaside fête, with prizes for "best babies," decorated prams, etc., and a few speeches interspersed with music and songs—in fact, a local "happy afternoon," of the kind for which in War time the National Baby Week made a good excuse. An experienced nurse and health visitor awarded the prizes, and used her opportunities, such as they were, well. There were no children coming from really poor homes and little attempt was made to treat the subject of child nurture from a scientific point of view. I think the newly started Baby Welcome would probably receive increased support and encouragement as one result of the effort, and would accordingly do better work. The idea set out by one speaker of the institution of some state reward or decoration to be worn by the mothers of the largest and best brought-up families was greeted with approval and

amusement, and one could hope that some of the audience might be encouraged to think more about problems of child life from the point of view of communal action.

A third gathering was organised by a really efficient and enthusiastic Baby Welcome Committee of some standing. There was a Church service and special sermon on the Sunday, an evening address followed by lantern slides illustrating baby nurture on Monday, a very large afternoon gathering on Wednesday, where sixty-seven babies were entered for the competitions, were undressed, medically examined and classified, another evening entertainment, and finally an "At Home" at the local Baby Welcome on Friday. There is no doubt that real interest was aroused in the neighbourhood. Remarks on housing problems were eagerly followed, especially on the methods for overcoming the difficulty people with large families experience in getting accepted as tenants for a good class of cottage, even when they are willing to pay the rent required. Questions were asked afterwards as to how this point could be met in any national scheme of rural and urban housing. Allusions to the advertisements for servants and employes "married, no family," evidently fell on very understanding ears. My impression was that public opinion was distinctly aroused, and that people began to feel that such matters not only ought to be, but could be, dealt with through the collective action of the community. The selective action of the War in lowering the quality of available fathers for the next generation was evidently partly appreciated as a possible cause of racial degeneration in the future.

At the judging of the babies in the afternoon, the system of marking was carefully explained—so many marks being allotted to each point, such as the condition of the skin, of the hair, of the teeth, firmness of the flesh, etc. All the children were undressed in the big hall, and the mothers followed the observations of the doctor and matron with keen interest, especially when any defect was considered a disqualification. I think they learned a very great deal, and they were most anxious for advice and help, both at the time and afterwards, as to how best they might overcome the weak points noticed in their children.

The children of the upper classes who were present had obviously a great advantage, whether by inheritance or nurture, in freedom from such defects as adenoids, decayed teeth, etc. They were also larger, heavier, and better nourished. It was also clear that in each class, where children of the labourers were concerned, the awards tended to go to the youngest, probably because there had been less time and opportunity for the special defects of unguarded childhood to develop.

My impression of the week's celebrations was that the local committee in each case held in it in their hands to make the celebration of permanent eugenic advantage or not, but that in nearly every case the mothers were encouraged in their efforts to bring up their children to be as healthy as circumstances permit. The status of maternity also received a distinct and, let us hope, a more than temporary uplift.

August 24th, 1917.

C. D. WHETHAM.

---

Since only a few of us are altogether on the evolutionary up-grade, or altogether on the corresponding down-grade, it will be difficult to discover a eugenic endeavour with a perfectly clear issue. There will almost always be a dysgenic fly in the eugenic ointment. But to have prolonged the life of a constitutionally doomed infant may not be too heavy a tax to pay on the profit of having saved a score or half a hundred from gratuitous enfeeblement of life. What "Mothers' and Babies' Clubs" are doing in thousands of cases is removing unnecessary extraneous inhibitions and giving infants of decently vigorous stock a fair chance. The constituencies doubtless differ in racial value in different